

STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE VERNON J. EHLERS
CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY, AND STANDARDS
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Full Committee Markup
H.R.5450, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Act
Wednesday June 14, 2006 at 2:30 p.m.
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to explain my bill. H.R. 5450, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Act, is an organic act for NOAA. An organic act defines the overall mission and functions of an agency. As an example, my bill states that the mission of NOAA is to:

- (1) understand and predict changes in the Earth's oceans and atmosphere;
- (2) conserve and manage coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes ecosystems; and
- (3) educate the public about these topics.

Since 1970 when NOAA was created by executive order, the agency has operated under a confusing collection of issue-specific laws that are not coordinated by an overarching mission.

In September 2004, the final report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean called for Congress to pass an organic act for NOAA and clarify in one place the mission and program goals of the agency. The Administration supports Congressional passage of a NOAA organic act, and made it a priority in the Administration formal response to the Ocean Commission report. In the 108th, witnesses at Science Committee hearings strongly endorsed my NOAA organic act. In a new report released just yesterday, the Joint Oceans Commission Initiative reiterated the need for NOAA to be codified in law, and this bill embodies specific priorities outlined in their report.

And yet, the Organic Act has languished for the past year over a jurisdictional claim by another Committee. This new version of my bill makes a simple addition to the language in Section 12 to address these jurisdictional claims so that we can pass this bill and let the Resources Committee do their part. The Resources Committee will add language about fisheries management and other NOAA issues that are under their jurisdiction. I look forward to working with the Members of that Committee to join us in passing truly comprehensive legislation for NOAA into law. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5450, and I yield back the balance of my time.